DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 262 503 EC 180 911

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TITLE Using Your Microcomputer to Acquire Special Education Information. 1984 Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, Reston, Va.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 84
CONTRACT 400-81-0031
NOTE 3p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091 (one free copy).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Disabilities; *Microcomputers; Professional Education; Special Education; *Telecommunications
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

The digest answers basic questions about using microcomputers for professional development in special education. Use of the microcomputer as a self-contained unit is described and the types of information available on diskette from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources are considered. The microcomputer's application in networking is discussed. The services of BRS/After Dark and DIALOG's Knowledge Index, in accessing special education files are reviewed. Contents are briefly described of four files: ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), ECER (Exceptional Child Education Resources), SPIN (School Practices Information Network), and SPIF (School Practices Information File). Additional resources, including a compilation of microcomputer courseware for use in elementary and secondary education and newsletters focusing on current developments in the high tech area, are listed. Information on DIALOG's Knowledge Index and the electronic communication network of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education concludes the digest. (CL)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1984
DIGEST

USING YOUR MICROCOMPUTER TO ACQUIRE SPECIAL EDUCATION INFORMATION

Your home computer has the potential to provide you with educational news, training, access to documents, software reviews, interactive networking, and conferencing if you know where to look, are willing to pay the costs, and have the equipment. This Digest answers some basic questions about using microcomputers for professional development and provides some resources for a deeper exploration of specific areas. There are two ways to use your microcomputer: (1) as a self-contained unit, and (2) as a terminal for networking.

USING YOUR MICROCOMPUTER AS A SELF-CONTAINED UNIT

When used as a self-contained unit, the information that appears on the screen comes off a diskette which is inserted directly into the microcomputer's disk drive. Information that is permanent in nature, that is, the kind of information that could just as well be printed, is beginning to be stored on diskettes. There are several advantages to using diskettes. They take up less room and are less expensive to produce than books. More importantly, specific information can be found quickly using the micro's search capability.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources has made selected portions of the ERIC database available on diskettes for the Apple II+, IIe, III with Emulator, and for the Franklin ACE 1000. ERIC citations from the last five years on *Computer Literacy* and on *Microcomputer Software Hardware Evaluation and Selection* are available.

Database disks in two other series—*Library Information Science* and *Educational Technology*—are available in quarterly updates from 1982 on. Each of the quarterly updates contains 250-350 citations on the appropriate topic entered in the ERIC system by ERIC IR. Subscribers are billed at the rate of $6.00 per disk (usually two or three) each quarter. A shipping and handling charge of $1.50 is added to all orders, which should be sent to Information Resources Publications, 030 Huntington Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York 13210. For additional information or a complete price list, write to the above address, or call Jane Klausmeier or David Morris at 315/423-3640.

Equipment needed: Apple II+ with Apple DOS 3.3, Apple IIe, Apple III with Emulator, or Franklin ACE 1000, and printer (optional).

USING YOUR MICROCOMPUTER AS A TERMINAL FOR NETWORKING

The real power of networking lies in the capability of microcomputers to communicate with other computers. To do this, a microcomputer is attached to a modem. A modem is an electronic device that converts the computer's binary code to auditory signals and sends the signals to other computers via telephone. Once a microcomputer is connected to a modem, it can function like a terminal of the computer with which it is connected. In this manner, individuals can access the information stored in mainframe computers even if the mainframe is thousands of miles away. By using telecommunications, individuals can contact large data banks, information services, or electronic bulletin boards.

BRS and DIALOG

There are two services that make their education databases available to individuals. BRS/After Dark and DIALOG's Knowledge Index each use a system of key words or phrases to locate relevant documents. These services to individuals are simplified versions of the regular BRS and DIALOG Information Services.

There are three education files available through BRS/After Dark of interest to special educators. The ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) file, the ECER (Exceptional Child Education Resources) file, and the SPIN (School Practices Information Network) file. Access to these databases costs $6.00 per hour. There is a one-time subscription charge of $50 with a $12 per month minimum usage charge. For more information, contact BRS/After Dark, 1200 Route 7, Latham, New York 12110 (800/833-4707).

The ERIC database includes over 200,000 journal articles and nearly as many other education related documents. Material comes into the database from 16 ERIC Clearinghouses, each with a different scope of interest. The Council for Exceptional Children operates the ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children. Over 2,000 items are entered each year by this clearinghouse alone.

The ECER (Exceptional Child Education Resources) database includes all the special education documents found in ERIC plus commercial publications, current dissertations, and nonprint media related to special education. The database is developed and maintained by The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091 (703/620-3660).

The School Practices Information Network (SPIN) includes the School Practices Information File (SPIF) and Resources in Computer Education (RICE). Both of these databases can be searched by using ERIC descriptors as well as by other descriptors specific to the content of the databases.

The School Practices Information File (SPIF) includes descriptions of over 7,000 innovative programs and practices currently in use in U.S. schools. The file is unique in that it provides names of contact persons and cost and availability information for ordering program materials.

Resources in Computer Education (RICE) was developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, and currently provides more than 2,000 descriptions of microcomputer courseware for use in elementary and secondary education, and a file of more than 300 producers or developers of

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such software. RICE also contains files on Computer Literacy with descriptions of instructional materials objectives and test items, and a Project Register of K-12 computer applications. For information about RICE, write or call Lynn Green, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 300 SW Sixth Avenue, Portland, OR 97204 (503 248-6800 or 800 547-6339).

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education provides two services through BRS: an electronic newsletter and a list of resource organizations and activities.

The newsletter, *High Tech for Postsecondary Educators*, is designed to help trainers and postsecondary educators keep up to date in the high tech area. The newsletter provides new information every two weeks on recent high-tech developments and changes in skills, occupations, and equipment.

Subscribers to BRS (or SPIN) can read the High Tech newsletter by asking for the database NPAN. There is no royalty charge.

For information on newsletter content, contact James Long, Project Director, High-Technology Electronic Newsletter Project, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210 (614 486-3655 or 800 848-4815 toll free outside Ohio).

Resource Organizations and Meetings for Educations (search label *ROME*), provides descriptions of hundreds of research and professional organizations, advocacy groups, and other nonprofit agencies involved in education and related disciplines. Subfiles include descriptions of meetings, projects, and products which are produced and sponsored by each educational organization. The principal search aid for ROME is the *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*. The file is updated quarterly. ROME is royalty free, with an online citation charge of $.03 for Title or Abstract. The producer is the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210. Contact Carl Oldsen at (614) 486-3655.

DIALOG'S KNOWLEDGE INDEX

Knowledge Index maintains databases in seven subject areas including Medicine and Psychology, Legal, and Education and Government Publications. The Education and Government Publications databases include ERIC, ECER, GPO Publications, and NTIS indexes of reports on research conducted or sponsored by the U.S. government.

There is a $35 one-time initiation fee, which includes the manual and up to 2 hours of searching. Online charges are 40¢ per minute ($24 per connect hour), including telecommunications for all Knowledge Index databases. Photocopies of articles are $4.50 plus 20¢ per page. To subscribe contact: Knowledge Index, DIALOG Information Services, Inc., 3460 Hillview Avenue, Palo Alto, California 94304 (800 528-6050 ext. 415).

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

SpecialNet is an electronic communications network designed for special educators. This system is maintained at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) in Washington, D.C. SpecialNet has two functions. First, it provides a number of electronic bulletin boards where information on diverse topics can be listed and accessed. Bulletin boards exist in the following areas: Federal, Litigation, Employment, Consultant, Practices, Multihandicapped, Request for Proposals, Exchange, EduTech, Congress, Early Childhood, Computer, Opinions, Television, Conference, Vision, Policy, Deafness, Vocational Education, Rural, CSPD, CEC NEWS, Assessment, and Gifted. Second, it provides an electronic mail service that subscribers may use to send messages to other SpecialNet subscribers.

The annual subscription fee to SpecialNet is $200. No minimum use per month is required. Contact Gary Snodgrass or Linda Gibbs at 202 822-7933. SpecialNet, 1201 16th Street, NW, Suite 404E, Washington, DC 20036.

RESOURCES

Accessing ERIC With Your Microcomputer—an ERIC Fact Sheet. Clearinghouse on Information Resources, Syracuse University, School of Education, Syracuse, New York 13210 (315 423-3640).

1983 Classroom Computer News: Directory of Educational Computing Resources. 1982 International Educations, Inc., 341 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02172. ISSN 0733-3129. ISBN 09607970-0-9.

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1984

The National Institute of Education

This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education under contract no. NIE-400-81-0031. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of NIE or the Department of Education.